AFRICA
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More than fifteen years have passed since the third edition of Africa was published. Much has changed in Africa, in the continent’s relations with the world, and in scholarship during the intervening years. Our vision for this edition is to focus on contemporary Africa in all its dynamism and diversity, to emphasize African agency and resourcefulness, and to stress social processes as well as institutions in revealing the ways that African women and men have constructed meaningful individual lives and engaged in collective activities at the local, national, and global levels. Our contributors, as in previous editions, convey ongoing events and discuss theoretical approaches within disciplines that affect understandings of the continent and the ways in which data are analyzed. All chapters are freshly conceptualized and written for this fourth edition, many with an expanded scope or integration of topics from previously separate chapters. Previous editions had bibliographic essays, and in this edition we add a new chapter on the availability of information on the internet in addition to published materials.

In its emphasis on contemporary Africa, this edition seeks to be comprehensive, but it does not attempt to be exhaustive either thematically or geographically. The chapters reflect their authors’ interests and regional specializations as well as their lived experiences in different parts of the continent. In keeping with recent developments and student interest, several new chapters were added to cover African cities, film, health and illness, and human rights. We have only one explicitly historical chapter, contemplating the legacies of the past, including the era of European colonialism, for contemporary Africa; other chapters develop the specific historical contexts for their topics. Geography examines not only Africa’s physical environments and their use but also how the idea of Africa as a place changed over time. The chapters on politics and development too reflect current scholarly trends to move from the “crisis” lens that dominated discussions for decades to a contemporary emphasis on “renewal” or, at least, tempered hope. The debate about the prospects for democracy continues, but our contributors seek to move beyond a
preoccupation with the short-term and formal transitions to electoral democracy to examine the impact of the long-term and informal processes and institutions of democratic governance.

Intrinsic African processes of cultural production remain a focus, but our contributors also recognize the impact of global cultural flows into and out of the continent. These complex interconnections, for example, brought both Christianity and Islam to Africa and continue to influence their development, even as Africans make these religions their own. African musics express the values in and practices of specific local communities, and they also draw on outside influences and flow into the world: the constant circulation of influences has increased in the last decades. Related processes are in evidence in the visual arts. In the scholarship of African literature, more critical attention is being paid now to the politics of local and international publishing and distribution and to multiple readerships in and beyond Africa. Family, kinship, and community remain central to people’s lives but are also highly fluid as women and men respond to material realities and engage forces of globalization. A discussion of livelihoods shows the complex strategies African women and men in rural and urban areas develop to make a living and the local, regional, and international networks they draw on.

In conceptualizing and publishing this fourth edition we have benefited from the suggestions and ideas of those who have adopted previous editions of *Africa* and used it in their classes throughout the world. Our Indiana University colleagues and graduate students also shared input from their teaching, and our undergraduates have pushed us to introduce *Africa* to a new generation of students.

The completion of a book of this scope requires not only the cooperation of the individual authors but also the support and assistance of others. We thank all who have contributed: our Indiana University Press editor, Dee Mortensen, and her assistant, Sarah Jacobi, for their patience and readiness to answer our numerous questions along the way; the University of Wisconsin Cartography Lab for producing the maps in the geography chapter; the Indiana University Art Museum and Lilly Library as well as colleagues here and elsewhere who have provided photographs for various chapters; former African Studies master’s degree students Casey Bushman and Steffan Horowitz for researching additional photographs; and, finally, Edda Callahan for preparing the manuscript and for staying with us through numerous modifications.

**The Editors**

*Bloomington, IN*

*January 2013*
AFRICA
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Africa has moved dynamically into the twenty-first century. It has more mobile phone users than the United States, for example, and cables placed along its Atlantic and Indian Ocean coasts recently have expanded broadband internet access. Africa still has some of the poorest countries in the world, but it also has six of the world’s ten fastest-growing economies of the past decade. Africans increasingly are city dwellers: nearly 40 percent of Africans live in urban areas now, and projections suggest that figure will increase to 50 percent by 2030. Occasional famines still claim lives, but overall rates of African infant mortality have dropped significantly in the past decade, and even though HIV/AIDS has not been eradicated, new therapies have decreased mortality and national campaigns have contained its expansion. Armed conflicts have not ended everywhere, but perpetrators of war crimes have been sentenced in courts, and more and more Africans vote in meaningful elections that regularly remove entrenched governments peacefully from power. Challenges still exist, and Africans direct their energies to finding solutions to problems: drawing on local knowledge, African entrepreneurs, politicians, artists, religious leaders, healers, and others are contributing to the social, cultural, and political affairs of their nations. This volume introduces students to African social, artistic, and political processes and structures, Africans and their energy, and the continent’s challenges and potential.

AFRICA’S DIVERSITY

Africa is vast, with a landmass more than three times the size of the continental United States. As the second-largest continent after Asia, it has dense rain forests and expansive deserts, undulating grasslands and snow-covered mountains, inland lakes, and many other geographical features. Africa is bifurcated by the equator, and most of its land is in the tropics, with only its northern and southern extremes in temperate zones. For millennia Africans have drawn resources from the continent’s
depths and used them for myriad endeavors: artisans fabricated iron tools and weapons, architects built tall stone structures, and merchants sold gold that not only adorned African bodies but also circulated in medieval European and imperial Chinese markets. During the nineteenth century Africa’s economic potential attracted European powers that conquered most of the continent and exported its resources until the end of colonial rule in the second half of the twentieth century. Today the export of commodities continues and has expanded to include not only a greater range of agricultural products but also gemstones, oil, and minerals essential to the manufacture of contemporary digital technologies. Foreign investors have been acquiring land for the production of biofuels and other crops in recent years, a practice that may threaten food security and livelihoods in a number of countries. New industries are also being developed on the continent, and Africans pursue commercial relations with emerging economies such as Brazil, China, and India as well as established European and North American trading partners.

The continent is home to more than a billion Africans speaking one or more of over two thousand languages, nearly a third of the world’s tongues. Some are closely related, but most are not and are distinguished by their grammatical structures, words, and consonants, such as the clicks of some southern African languages. Language is one marker of identity in Africa, and ethnicity is another. Their relationship is complex: many African ethnic groups have common historical experiences and share the same language, while others were independent communities with their own languages and developed collective identities only under colonial rule. Some urban Africans identify with the ethnicity of their parents but speak only the urban lingua franca; others identify ethnically with the language they speak even if they are of different parentage. Given the great linguistic and ethnic diversity of Africa, cross-cultural exchanges are the norm and have provided benefits to individuals and groups; ethnic solidarities lead to conflict only in rare and specific circumstances, generally in a context of access to resources. Often media reports highlight social conflicts, use the term “tribe” in reference to opposing groups, and suggest that enmity has endured for centuries. “Tribe,” however, conveys otherness and obscures more than it reveals. Those identifying as Hutu or Tutsi in Rwanda, for example, share the same language and much of the same culture. The terms “Hutu” and “Tutsi” express historical categories for occupational and class differences that became codified and the basis for different access to resources in the European colonial era and which subsequently have been politicized by specific actors in the postcolonial era. Understanding conflicts in Africa, and the more ubiquitous instances of constructive social interactions, requires analysis of the ways Africans define social differences in local contexts and deploy social solidarities to meet specific political ends.

Africa currently has fifty-four states. Centralized political power is not novel on the continent: Africans founded polities with a great diversity of political cultures and organizational arrangements from the time of ancient Egypt forward. The era of European conquest established new colonial territories, with only imperial Ethiopia
able to prevent colonial occupation with its victory over Italian forces at Adwa in 1896 and Liberia avoiding colonial rule in part through U.S. protection. Elsewhere Africans found themselves in colonial arrangements encompassing numerous ethnic groups with different political traditions but also frequently dividing groups between colonies. European colonial rule did not endure much past the 1960s, but its structures remained influential in the states that emerged after the African struggle for independence: most international boundaries in Africa today follow the lines drawn by European powers. Nigeria, for example, has more than 150 million citizens speaking more than 250 languages, and its primary political divide between north and south echoes the colonial division of the country into two administratively autonomous northern and southern regions. Some states, such as South Sudan, established in 2011, represent the result of a decades-long civil war that finally severed ties between northern and South Sudan. Not all contemporary African politics replays the colonial past, but the legacy of that era is evident in continuing efforts to create a sense of national identity corresponding to current state boundaries.

Some scholars and international policy makers distinguish between northern and sub-Saharan Africa, frequently considering North Africa as part of the Middle East; popular sentiments add to the perception of a continental divide. The Sahara Desert, however, never was a barrier, as ideas, goods, and people have crossed it for millennia. Arabic is the lingua franca in northern Africa, but it also is spoken as a first language south of the Sahara in Mauritania and Sudan. Berber languages similarly are spoken on both sides of the Sahara. Ethnicity shapes the politics of northern African states as much as in those below the Sahara: Algeria, Mali, and Niger have faced Tuareg separatism in their Saharan regions, for example. Other supposed markers of difference also do not justify a continental division. Islam is the dominant religion in northern Africa, but similar majorities of Muslims live in several sub-Saharan states, such as Chad, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Somalia. Race too is socially constructed and not a basis for dividing the continent into separate entities. Historical connections between some northern African states are clear: the initial Arab conquests swept across the region, Ottoman rule later united the region from Egypt to Algeria (but did not include Morocco), and the region’s location along the Mediterranean coast creates opportunities for more intimate exchanges with Europe than are possible for sub-Saharan regions. Recent political protests against entrenched leaders in northern Africa led the media to refer to an “Arab Spring,” but close examination of events reveals connections not only across northern Africa to the Middle East but also across the Sahara to Mali, Uganda, and other African states. Relevant regional blocs are discussed as appropriate, but most chapters in this book draw on examples from both sides of the Sahara to illustrate general patterns.

AFRICA AND THE WORLD

Africa is intimately connected to the world through contemporary processes of migration and travel, technological change, and globalization, but it never has been
isolated. Africa’s eastern and southern regions provide evidence of the earliest biological and cultural transformations in human history in their rock paintings and in archeological excavations of stone tools and bones. After the first humans migrated from Africa to populate other regions of the world, Africans on the continent continued to engage others, exchanging crops, techniques, ideas, and religions with emerging cultural formations in neighboring parts of Asia and Europe. European scientific expeditions in the nineteenth century created an erroneous impression that Africa was only then being “discovered,” even though commercial exchanges had defined Europe’s relations with Africa for centuries, including the four hundred years of enslavement and slave trading in which more than eleven million Africans were taken forcibly to the Americas. New research on the “Black Atlantic” points to ways that African ideas and practices influenced Europe and America in this era, beyond the significant contributions of slave labor on plantations and other economic enterprises.

Nineteenth-century transformations associated with the rise of industrial economies in Europe and North America shaped Africa’s relations with the world for the past two hundred years. At first Europeans took advantage of new innovations in weapons and other technologies to conquer and colonize most of the continent during the late nineteenth century. The era of European colonial rule lasted less than a century, but it shaped African states of the independence era and structured economic relations. In the postcolonial era some dimensions of continuing relations between European powers and their former colonies have been characterized as “neocolonial”; the period of Cold War politics and economic policies dictated by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund similarly confined the options African states had for independent action. The last two decades, however, have witnessed growing autonomy through a revitalized continent-wide political institution (the African Union), regional economic and political groupings, and increasing economic power through relations with new trading partners in the emerging economies of Asia and Latin America. Africa is poised to define its role in twenty-first-century world affairs in ways that break from the patterns of the past two hundred years.

Some assume that Africa’s global connections first brought education to Africa through schools established by missionaries and colonial governments, but this conception is a narrow understanding of education that ignores the institutions Africans had developed to transmit knowledge, to form moral individuals capable of taking their places in society, and to produce new knowledge. Initiations and storytelling were pervasive, and apprenticeships transmitted technical knowledge to specialists. With the spread of Islam came additional educational institutions at diverse levels and a new script that some Africans used to write in their own languages. These institutions continue to exist alongside or in combination with schools that missionaries, colonial administrations, and postcolonial governments established. The number of languages spoken on the continent poses a challenge for formal education in these latter institutions, as does the availability of resources. In spite
of these difficulties, African states have educated citizens who create new knowledge and train future generations, their universities have produced doctors, lawyers, and other professionals, and their policies have encouraged entrepreneurship and the creation of new businesses.

The flourishing cultural production that has characterized Africa in the past continues and innovatively draws on the global circulation of ideas, images, and people. Visual artists, writers, filmmakers, and musicians take advantage of contemporary technologies to experiment with new forms of expression, collaborate across national and regional boundaries, and reach new publics on and off the continent. Scholars too have developed new synergies through continental networks to advance the production of knowledge and enhance its impact. Many diasporan intellectuals actively work with colleagues and institutions on the continent and influence scholarship at home. Engagement with the world is not confined to acclaimed cultural and intellectual producers or to those who migrate to distant lands. Africans in all walks of life who remain on the continent are tuned in to what happens beyond their communities through the media, the internet, and trade networks, and they draw on these creatively to help solve problems of daily life and deal with adversity. They also participate in the world through the imagination and through the use of foreign products that connect them symbolically with the wider world.

Not surprisingly, modernity defines Africa as much as it does other world areas. Africans embrace key markers of modernity, such as organizational rationalization and democratic participation in many areas of life, and they also reflect on their place in the world through art, literature, religion, and other cultural expressions. Outsiders often sharply distinguish between “tradition” and “modernity,” but in relation to Africa these labels can obscure complex negotiations in unfolding African cultural processes. “Tradition,” for example, can imply, as does “tribe,” stasis and rigid continuity, whereas African cultural production has always involved aspects of continuity and change, expertise and experimentation, adaptation and innovation. Understanding modernity requires examining the ways Africans reflect on their communities, conceptualize and evaluate social change, and define their worlds in both local and global terms.

**USING THIS TEXTBOOK**

Africa’s diversity, its involvement with the world, and its experiences with modernity are three of the many themes discussed in the chapters that follow. *Africa* is an introductory text that seeks to avoid academic arguments in favor of clear statements about major issues. The suggested readings at the end of each chapter allow students to explore specialized approaches and detailed arguments. The chapters are not grouped into related clusters because ideas and themes cross the chapters. Geography is first because an appreciation of Africa’s physical diversity is important; history and social relations follow to offer perspectives about Africa’s past
dynamism and contemporary complexity, essential for understanding subsequent chapters. We leave it to instructors to adapt the book to their syllabus—for example, moving from geography and history to livelihoods and urbanization, politics and development, religion and health, or the arts. Chapter 15, “Print and Electronic Resources,” provides suggestions for further research to help keep abreast of continuing developments and new trends in Africa.
Africa is a continent, the second-largest after Asia. It contains fifty-four countries, several of them vast. Each of Africa’s biggest countries—Algeria, Congo, and Sudan—is about three times the size of Texas, four times that of France. Africa could hold 14 Greenlands, 20 Alaskas, 71 Californias, or 125 Britains. Newcomers to the study of Africa often are surprised by the simple matter of the continent’s great size. No wonder so much else about Africa is vague to outsiders.

This chapter introduces Africa from the perspective of geography, an integrative discipline rooted in the ancient need to describe the qualities of places near or distant. The chapter begins by examining how the world’s understanding of Africa has developed over time. Throughout history, outsiders have held a greater number of erroneous geographic ideas about Africa than true ones. The misunderstandings generated by these false ideas have been unhelpful and occasionally disastrous. After this survey of geographic ideas, the chapter settles into a general preference for what is true, probing, in turn, Africa’s physical landscapes, its climates, its bioregions, and the way that Africans over time have used and shaped their environments. A final section outlines the difficulties Africa has confronted and the betterment Africans anticipate as they integrate ever more fully and fairly with emerging global systems.

Knowledge of geography is a frame for deeper inquiry in all fields because the qualities of place shape every human endeavor. Anyone striving to understand the challenges and potentialities that citizens of African countries have to work with in their struggle to obtain for themselves and their families the security and prosperity that is their birthright would do well to reflect regularly on Africa’s geography. A map, especially one’s own emerging mental map of Africa, is an excellent organizing tool. It structures information according to the fundamentally interesting question “Where?” It is a solid place to start any journey, including one’s personal passage toward a more nuanced understanding of Africa.
THE IDEA OF AFRICA

Places are ideas. Consider, for example, that most significant of places, home. Every home is a physical entity—it exists concretely—but the meaning of home, its reality, is all tied up in the experiences and emotions of the people who live in that place or otherwise know it. Or consider Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh is a particular collection of buildings, roadways, rivers, people, and a great deal else occupying a defined portion of western Pennsylvania, but it also is an idea. More correctly, it is a set of ideas, because each of us has a different sense of Pittsburgh based on our views of cities in general and whatever memories and associations, accurate and false, Pittsburgh as place or word conjures in our minds when we encounter it. So too Africa. Though without doubt a continent, Africa, like all continents, also is a complex of ideas that have flowed through the human imagination, accurately and fancifully, generously and carelessly, over a great span of time, giving rise to many meanings and actions, some grounded in truth and noble, others based in error and unfortunate.

If Africa is a continent but also a product of the human imagination, the first question that must be asked is when it originated. Physical Africa, the continental landmass, is easy to date. Any basic geology text will describe how Africa took shape after the breakup and drifting apart of the pieces of the supercontinent Pangaea about
180 million years ago. As for the idea of Africa, it is somewhat more recent. The idea of Africa came into being over the last two thousand years, and it did so largely in Europe. The fact that the idea of Africa developed mostly in Europe goes a long way toward explaining how Africa is conceived worldwide, even now.

This claim—that Europeans were largely responsible for the idea of Africa—is easy to substantiate and does not discredit Africa and its people. Europeans invented America too, just as Chinese invented Taiwan and Arabs the Maghreb. All through world history, at scales ranging from the continent to the community, outsiders have given identities to places. A common way this happens is by first naming. There were no Native Americans, only hundreds of distinct peoples such as the Ojibwa of the Great Lakes and the Navajo of the western desert, until Europeans crossed the Atlantic five hundred years ago and announced the existence of a continent to be called America. Another way outsiders give identity to place is by inspiring or provoking, sometimes by threat or aggression, unity and regional loyalty where none existed before. There was no Germany until Bismarck, around 1870, convinced the German-speaking principalities of central Europe that they were one and that joining Prussia to form an entity called Germany would be in the interest of all.

Even though few early Africans knew the bounds of the continent or could imagine Africa as a whole (the same can be said of early people on all of the continents), there were exceptions. One interesting case comes down to us from the Greek historian Herodotus, who in the fifth century BCE (Before the Common Era) wrote a brief but tantalizing report of a sea journey by Phoenicians, or organized by King Necho II of Egypt, around the landmass we call Africa (which Herodotus called Libya), undertaken about two hundred years before Herodotus’s time. While

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Map 1.2. The World According to Herodotus (ca, 450 BCE).